

MOSCOW LOOSENS ECONOMIC SANCTION AGAINST LITHUANIA

MODEST INCREASE IN FUEL

Baltic Republic Sees Gesture
as Clearing Road Toward
Compromise on Status

MOSCOW, June 13 — The Soviet Government eased one of its economic sanctions against Lithuania today as an encouragement for negotiations to begin over the rebellious republic's attempt to thrive independent of Moscow.

The Kremlin move, announced at a meeting with Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskiene of Lithuania, amounted to a relatively modest increase in fuel for a single fertilizer factory in the republic.

But it was important as a gesture of the Gorbachev Government's eagerness to back down from the three-month sovereignty crisis and negotiate a solution.

[In Washington, the United States hailed Moscow's reported decision to ease its economic sanctions against Lithuania, and President Bush called President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's talks with Baltic leaders a "significant change" that could help end the Baltic crisis. Page A18.]

Restoring Some Faith

Mrs. Prunskiene held exploratory talks with a Soviet delegation led by Prime Minister Nikolai I. Ryzhkov, who announced the slight easing in the fuel embargo. Later she said, "This meeting allowed us to have more faith in one another. It is very obvious they do want negotiations to begin."

She emphasized, however, that the Lithuanian Government would have to settle the basic question of whether it might suspend or ease some of its independence measures, a conciliatory step the Kremlin wants as a condition for ending the sanctions and starting full-scale negotiations on the future relations between the republic and the central Government.

Mr. Ryzhkov promised to double the limited amount of natural gas that is being piped to the Lithuanian fertilizer factory at Jonava, Lithuanian officials said. The increase of 3.5 million cubic meters of gas would raise the plant to 30 percent of capacity, a spokeswoman for the Lithuanian Government said, and would put about 1,600 plant employees back to work.

Mr. Ryzhkov said after the meeting he had told Mrs. Prunskiene that "great opportunities" will open if they accept the idea of "freezing" the independence resolutions "not to annul them" but to get negotiations under way.

"There has been progress," he said. "We have made our step, now it's up to them to make theirs."

In Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital,

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President Vytautas Landsbergis also reacted with optimism, telling Lithuania's Parliament that his conversation in Moscow on Tuesday with Mr. Gorbachev had been "concrete, constructive and, I should say, even friendly."

"This can be regarded as a good sign showing an obvious desire to solve the problem, not to make us yield to the one who is stronger but to find a way out acceptable to both sides," he said, adding that the Soviet Government seemed interested in ending the economic sanctions "as soon as possible" by the two sides taking "simultaneous steps" toward each other.

Moving Toward a Solution

The mood about the sovereignty crisis has shifted in recent days, with President Gorbachev laying out new terms to invite negotiations and Lithuanian officials offering indications, in turn, that they expected an end soon to the economic sanctions and progress toward some sort of compromise.

But this was not the outcome of the one-hour-forty-five-minute meeting at the Kremlin. Mrs. Prunskiene said the next step would be to present Mr. Gorbachev's latest proposals to the Lithuanian Council of Ministers on Saturday, and eventually take them up in the republic's parliament and craft counter proposals for the Kremlin.

Rita Dapkus, a Lithuanian spokeswoman, quoted the Prime Minister as saying after the meeting that "now we are pretty clear on the position the

Soviet Government takes, which makes it much easier for us to know where we go from here."

Most recently Mr. Gorbachev has talked of a new Soviet federation that would treat all Soviet republics as "sovereign states" with considerable control over their own affairs. He has seemed amenable to Lithuania's latest offer to place a moratorium during a period of negotiations on all actions taken since its declaration of independence, made March 11.

One Concrete Promise

In initially trying to contain the sovereignty movement that is sweeping through the Soviet republics, Mr. Gorbachev reacted to Lithuania's dec-

A gesture stirs new hope in Baltic republic.

laration of independence by imposing economic sanctions including a tough but not complete fuel blockade and embargoes on a few other commodities, resulting in closings at many factories in the republic of 3.4 million people and widespread hardships like gas shortages.

In the talks today, the Lithuanian Prime Minister had brought up the possibility of easing the embargo on crude oil supplies to the republic, her office

said after the meeting. But Prime Minister Ryzhkov replied that subject was much larger and no decision could be made as yet, and instead promised to increase the gas supply to the fertilizer plant.

"That's the only concrete thing he promised," Mrs. Prunskiene said after the meeting, according to her office.

Her office could not immediately confirm reports in the Soviet press that she had enthusiastically declared after the meeting that the supply embargo would be eased for several other Lithuanian enterprises.

Interfax, a quasi-independent Soviet press agency, quoted the Lithuanian Prime Minister as saying of the Soviet Government after the meeting: "We do not doubt that it is ready to lift the economic blockade. This was said very concretely, so we have the opportunity to act and open contacts with the Government."

Her office said one "model" of the future outlined in the Soviet proposals was that of taking part with "special status" in a new future Soviet federation. Her office said she thought this model could not immediately be discussed because the republic would need to know more about the future look of the Soviet Union, particularly in consideration of the republic's determination to set up trade and travel contacts with the West.

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